

## **Gospel of John Study**

### **Session 14**

In our last session we witnessed Jesus' public feud with the Jewish religious leaders escalate over His true identity. What started out as a spat concerning the Jews being upset that Jesus was breaking their traditions concerning the Sabbath ended up by Jesus giving them a lengthy defense of His actions based upon His true identity - He is the Son of God. He gave several witnesses to this fact such as John the Baptist's testimony, the testimony of His miracles, the witness of His Heavenly Father and the witness of Scripture pointing to Him as the source of eternal life.

Now in this session we are going to see an even larger number of people follow Jesus. After the healings He performed in the area of Galilee, many people started following Him. Jesus performed two of His most notable miracles in this short period of time and what the apostle John shows to us is the Jesus is a type of Moses, a person the Jews would understand, yet they miss the boat - literally and figuratively in this instance. While Jesus, like Moses, is leading the people to the Promised Land, many will refuse to enter. However, as we'll read, what Jesus is doing in this section of Scripture is for His disciples' benefit in the long run.

George Washington's impact upon our nation is undeniable and reflected in many ways. As well as one state and our nation's capitol named after him, there are 241 townships and twenty-six cities named after him. There are four forts and five mountain and three ports that bear his name. In addition to at least a dozen colleges named after him there are countless bridges and parks that also carry his name. Now suppose you combined George Washington with the Pope or Billy Graham so that he was not only the political founder of our nation but also the leaders of our religion, we still would not be anywhere near where the Jews felt about Moses. Not only was Moses responsible for bringing the Jews out of slavery in Egypt, he was the one who governed and led the Jews as a coherent body, a nation of people, for the first time. He was also the greatest religious leader in the Jewish faith as he climbed the mountain to meet with God in person and bring the Law to the people by establishing the covenant that defines the Jewish faith. It is this reverence for Moses that is the background for John chapter 6.

Jesus mentioned Moses back at the end of chapter 5 when He told the Jewish religious leaders that they failed to believe Moses because they were not believing in Him and Moses wrote about Him. Now Jesus is going to do some things to point directly at Him being the Moses-type leader God wants them to have to break them free from their slavery, but not the slavery the people wanted freedom from.

Because of the way the chapters are divided, we need to return to the last section of our text from our last session so that we can see what the apostle John is doing here in chapter 6.

#### **[John 5:39-47]**

Now with this fresh in our minds, we are going to see four details mentioned in the first four verses of chapter 6 that point to show us that Jesus is to be considered a Moses-like figure. None of these four details are significant in and of themselves but when you take them together and with what Jesus is about to do, you cannot miss the message - Jesus is even greater than Moses. Let's look at these four details that help explain this passage.

## [John 6:1-4]

Before we get to the four details that unlock the meaning to this section of Scripture, there are two things to point out first. 1) “After these things” is a vague expression in the Greek. It establishes sequence but not exact chronology. All we know is that these things happened at an indefinite time after the events of chapter 5. 2) The Sea of Galilee is referred to by John as Tiberias. In the Old Testament, this lake was called Kinnereth which means “lyre” for the shape of the lake. Around 20 AD, Herod Antipas founded a city on the west shore of the lake and called it Tiberias, after the Roman Emperor. Gradually, over the course of a generation, the name spread to the lake as well. So while in the time when John lived these events as one of Jesus’ disciples, the lake was still called the Sea of Galilee, by the time John actually wrote this gospel, he used the name which had become common at that time, Tiberias. This points again to a fairly late date for John’s gospel in that he is trying to make sure those who are reading his gospel understand where this took place. Now back to the four details.

### Point #1

Q: What is Jesus leading? (*v.2 - a large crowd*)

Q: What did Moses lead out of Egypt? (*a very large crowd of people, the Hebrew people*)

Q: Where was Moses leading the people? Away from where and to where? (*Away from slavery in Egypt and to freedom in the Promised Land*)

As we’ll see, Jesus’ goal is to lead the people from the bondage of sin into the freedom of salvation.

### Point #2

Q: Why were these people in John 6 following Jesus? (*v.2 - because they saw the signs Jesus performed. This is significant. They were not following Him out of a heart or motive to obey Him.*)

Q: Why did the people follow Moses out of Egypt? (*Because of the miracles God performed through Moses proving him to be the deliverer of God’s people. Moses directed the ten plagues upon Egypt and these miracles authenticated his standing as one sent by God.*)

As we have seen and will see again, Jesus performed many signs and wonders in order to point to the fact that He was sent from the Father and His words were true and authoritative.

### Point #3

Q: Where did Jesus go and sit down with His disciples? (*v.3 - upon a mountain*)

Q: After leading the Hebrew people out of Egypt, where did Moses and his servant Joshua go to

receive the Law from the Lord? (*Mount Sinai*)

In the people's minds, going up a mountain is one way to meet with God. It would have brought back the image of Moses heading up Mt. Sinai to meet with God.

#### Point #4

Q: Back in John 6, what event was about to take place? (*v.4 - the Passover*)

Q: What did the annual Passover celebration commemorate? (*God's rescue of His people from slavery in Egypt.*)

Q: What was the final plague that God brought upon the Egyptians? (*The death of the first born*)

Q: During the night when the angel of death was killing the first born child of every household, how were God's people to prevent the angel from visiting their homes? (*by killing a lamb and smearing the blood of that lamb on the doorposts of their houses. This lamb had to be spotless (Exodus 12:5) which reminds us of Christ.*)

Q: After the Jews killed the lamb and smeared the blood of the lamb on the doorposts, what were the Jews commanded to do to the lamb? (*they were to eat the lamb that night*)

This is the second of three Passovers mentioned by John in this gospel.

Q: Who did John the Baptist proclaim Jesus to be? (*John 1:29, 36 - the lamb of God*)

The first Passover mentioned was back in chapter 2 when Jesus was speaking of Himself as the Temple that would need to be destroyed - a way of pointing to His own death. The third Passover mention will come in chapter 11 when it is time for Jesus' actual death. This second mention of the Passover says that it was that time of the year, it was near the Passover but not the celebration quite yet. Not only were the Jews commanded to eat the lamb they slaughtered for the Passover but they also ate unleavened bread, bread without yeast. Jesus is about to feed 5,000 men (and 10-15,000 women and children with them) bread that He creates as well as then give a discourse on the bread of life. It is this bread that must be eaten in order to receive eternal life.

When John mentions the Passover here, he is bringing to mind these things which the Jews would have understood. These four details here in these first four verses do a lot more than let us know where and when this took place, they give us the keys to unlocking the meaning of what happens next. What happened next shows us that Jesus was walking in the footsteps of Moses. Keep in mind that Jesus wanted to be seen in the same light as Moses as He was sent from God to deliver His people from bondage.

**[Deuteronomy 18:15]**

What Jesus wants people to see in this passage is that He is that prophet Moses prophesied would come and now they need to listen to Him.

**[John 6:5-15]**

This miracle is the only miracle of Jesus' ministry that is recorded in all four gospels.

**[Matthew 14: 13-21]**

**[Mark 6:33-44]**

**[Luke 9:10-17]**

Moses was tasked with bringing the Hebrew people out of bondage in Egypt, across the wilderness, and eventually into the Promised Land. Consider the logistics of this task. There were between one and two million Jews and others who left Egypt. How can a person lead such a mob of people, much less get them to a single place? How do you supply the basic needs of food and water for two million people, especially when you are traversing a desert area?

In the historical account of the Exodus, God fed the people miraculously with manna, or bread from heaven. The people would collect it each day and then eat that day's supply. It would spoil if you tried to keep it overnight. Yet on the sixth day everyone was to collect a double portion so that they would not have to collect any on the Sabbath. This portion did not spoil for two days.

**[Exodus 16:2-5, 35]**

In the same way that Moses had to feed the people through divine provision, Jesus faced a similar circumstance in that He led a great crowd of people and they were in a desolate area.

Q: Which disciple does Jesus ask as to where they can get food for the crowd? (*v.5 - Philip*)

The reason Jesus asked Philip was because Philip was from this area. If he didn't know of a place to get this much food, no one else would know either.

Q: What was Philip's response to Jesus? (*v.7 - Even a large amount of money would not be enough to buy food for this horde. 200 denarii was worth about 8 months of wages. Even at that, everyone might get one bite.*)

This situation was orchestrated by God to show Jesus' disciples (and us) that there are some problems in life that are just too big for us to solve. These times require God's intervention. We are powerless to solve these problems on our own or even in groups of people but God can do all things. Like Philip, we are quick to seek out human solutions to all our problems. We like to think we can fix anything. However, as Philip noted and to his credit, he noted that this problem lacked a human solution. Just like Moses faced when trying to feed the entire Jewish nation when they left Egypt. When we as believers face these sorts of impossible

tasks I have noted three responses that Christians make. The first is to quit; to simply walk away from the task God has placed before them. The second is to modify God's will by diminishing the task into something that is doable by human standards and then patting themselves on the back for their ingenuity. Neither of these options will bring God glory. The third option and the only truly honoring option based upon our faith in an infinite God is to admit our inability to do anything in our own power to get the task God has placed before us done and to turn to God to get it done. He will be magnified before man and our faith will grow greatly. With God all things are possible (Mark 10:27).

Q: What was Andrew's discovery? (*vv.8-9 - He found a boy who had a lunch with him consisting of five barley loaves and two fish.*)

The first half of Andrew's statement seems to show faith in Jesus at this point. Here's a little something, maybe you can do something with that. However he ends with "what good is this morsel for so many people?" The loaves spoken of in this verse were probably about the size of a modern biscuit. Can you imagine showing up to a breakfast with 4,999 of your closest friends and there being five biscuits to split among everyone?! The question for us is how many times do we need to see Jesus do the impossible before we start believing Him? The disciples saw Him turn water into wine and then heal multitudes of people and cast out demons. Jesus was trying to move them to see that when they face circumstances and problems that have no human solution, the solution is to turn to God not give up.

Notice that Jesus has the people recline on the grass. As we know from other accounts, Jesus had them place the people in groups of 50-100 people. The reference to much grass in this place (or in Mark that the grass was green) lets us know that it was indeed the time of the Passover, March/April timeframe. If it was earlier, the grass wouldn't be green yet (recovered from winter) and if it were later, the grass would be brown or yellow from the late spring/summer heat. This setting also brings to mind Psalm 23 where the Good Shepherd causes His sheep to lie down in green pastures, a place of rest and contentment.

Just as Moses, Jesus had fed the multitude miraculously. There was no sleight of hand nor did this arise as a mass sharing event where everyone had the food and just decided to share with one another. This food was created by Jesus.

Q: How much food were the people allowed to eat? (*v.11 - everyone could eat as much as they wanted*)

So Jesus set the precedent for by creating the first "all-you-can-eat" buffet. He turned five barley biscuits and two fish into enough food for 20,000 people to eat. This far overdid the meager bits everyone would have had with the 200 denarii of food, had they been able to buy it. God's provision satisfies whereas man's means would not.

**[Jeremiah 31:14]**

**[Ephesians 3:20-1]**

Q: How much food was left over after everyone at their fill? (*v.13 - 12 baskets*)

These pieces that were collected were not pieces that had fallen on the ground or were crumbs. These were pieces of the loaves that Jesus broke and created that were not eaten on that day. Though the Lord was lavish in His provision, He didn't want anything wasted. Collecting the leftovers at the end of a meal was a Jewish custom of that day. This also is a symbolic foreshadowing of a statement to come in His teaching later in this account.

**[John 6:39]**

If Jesus is careful to make sure no food is lost, then we can count on Him to be sure that no soul entrusted to His care will be lost either.

But there is more to this than observing a custom. First, John's notation here was that there was more collected at the end of the meal than there was when they started. In other words, Jesus created a lot of food for a lot of people. Secondly, the crowd was primarily Jewish and the symbolism is that as there are 12 tribes of Israel, and the 12 baskets left over represent God's provision for His 12 tribes of people.

**[Mark 8:1-9]**

Q: How many people did Jesus feed in this account? (*v.9 - about 4,000*)

Q: How many baskets of food were collected after everyone at their fill? (*v.8 - seven large baskets*)

This miracle happened in a largely Gentile area. While there were undoubtedly some Jews present, there was also a large number of Gentiles curious about Jesus. The 7 baskets of leftovers in this story represent the provision of God for the Gentiles, as 7 is the number for divine perfection. The Greek supports this thought in that the word used for "basket" in these accounts has a particularly Jewish association while the word for "basket" in Matthew and Mark (that share the story of Jesus feeding the 4,000) does not have any Jewish connotation.

Q: Back in John 6, what did the people come to conclude about Jesus after the meal? (*v.14 - That Jesus was the prophet that had come into the world. Notice they don't call Jesus a normal prophet but rather THE prophet as associated with Moses prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:15.*)

Q: What did Jesus do after this miracle? (*v.15 - He retreated to a nearby mountain*)

Q: Why did Jesus withdraw from the crowd at this time? (*v.15 - They were intending to forcefully make Him their king*)

While the culture of the day was certainly male-centric, the reference to 5,000 men being fed in v.10 could be in reference to v.15. The 5,000 men would represent a considerable guerilla force to launch a campaign against the Romans. These people may have well understood Jesus

to be the prophet Moses spoke of but they saw Him in kingly role, a warrior role rather than a sacrificial lamb role. Think of it. If Moses, the first prophet, led the people out of bondage to the Egyptians, Jesus, the next prophet, would certainly lead them out of bondage to the Romans. Jesus understood taking this sort of crown would not only prevent Him from fulfilling His divine mission but also lead to a conflict with Rome in which the Jews would not escape unscathed.

There is a danger today of doing the same thing to Jesus. We can attempt to force Him into a box of our own design in an attempt to make Him what we want Him to be rather than take Him at face value as He is portrayed in Scripture.

Note that Jesus withdraws to the mountain alone while His disciples head for a small boat and will cross the lake at night. This is the setting for the next miracle in this passage. Remember that both of these miracles are making a point about Jesus and He is going to use them in His teaching in our next session.

### **[John 6:16-21]**

After leading the people of God out of Egypt, Moses ran into a terrible problem. They ran into the Red Sea. Pharaoh's army was in hot pursuit of the Israelites and so by being trapped by the sea with no escape, this was soon to be a slaughter. God told Moses to stretch out his staff across the Red Sea and the waters miraculously parted. After God divided the sea, the people walked across on dry ground. When Pharaoh's army attempted to cross, the waters returned and drowned them all.

Q: In our passage, where is Jesus when the disciples cross the lake? (*v.15 - alone on the mountain*)

Q: What was the weather like on that night as the disciples crossed the lake in that boat? (*v.18 - The winds were strong and the waters were stirred*)

In all the gospel accounts, the distance given by those in the boat is that they were around the halfway point of the journey. Due to the weather and sea conditions it might have been tempting to turn around but there was no advantage in that as it was the same distance.

### **[Matthew 14:22-33]**

### **[Mark 6:45-53]**

Q: What was the source of the disciple's fright? (*v.19 - seeing Jesus walking on the water*)

While it stands to reason that the disciples were not happy about being out in the middle of the lake during a storm at night, many of them were seasoned fishermen and fished this lake. It's interesting that they did not fear the storm, but rather they feared the One who created the storm. As we read this account in Matthew (14:26), the disciples thought He was the ghost coming to kill them. At this moment, the disciples were confronted with a power beyond their

reckoning. Jesus was walking on top of the water just like He was walking on dry ground.

Q: What was Jesus response to His disciples' fright? (*v.20 - It is I. Do not be afraid*)

Jesus identified Himself and then encouraged them to not be afraid.

This account gives us a truth about Jesus. When we face circumstances we've never faced before, when Jesus comes to us, it may be in a way we've never witnessed Him working before. Initially, it may cause us fear but we can rest assured, that if we will, by faith, recognize that it is Jesus at work, we can lay the fear down. He's here for us. We just need to focus on the Word of God and be actively listening to the Spirit so that we recognize Jesus no matter how He appears to us.

Q: What happens immediately after Jesus got into the boat? (*v.21 - The boat came to land*)

### **[Psalm 107:23-31]**

If you recall from our End Times Study, you'll remember that the sea often represents chaos and disorder. Jesus then is the One who controls the wind and the waves of our lives and brings us to stability and order when nothing else we do can. He can still the sea and thus the chaos of this world, just as He got the disciples safely to the other shore.

Just like Moses, through divine intervention, Jesus fed the multitude. Just like Moses, through divine intervention, Jesus crossed the sea. This Jesus is the One the people have been anticipating since Moses. Yet Jesus was greater than Moses. Moses was the great liberator of the Israelites that brought them to a new land. So now, in Jesus' day, as Rome had conquered Israel and made it part of their empire, a new leader had arisen who was doing mighty works. The people were reacting as their expectations led them - to consider Jesus as the One who would liberate them from Roman rule. However, Jesus thwarted the plans of that multitude because He knew He had come to wage a different war - one of independence and liberation from sin, not any earthly kingdom.

In the end, the Israelites didn't really want Jesus to be their king but rather their puppet. They would follow Him as long as He did the things they wanted Him to do. This is not the Christian faith at all. We do not tell Jesus what to do. He tells us what to do and how to do it. The problem is when we want the blessings without actually following or allowing His Spirit to guide our lives. We must lay down our expectations and requirements for Jesus and come to Him as He is. It is there that you will find that Jesus is far greater than Moses or anyone else you can imagine.

Q: Do you have any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?